

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 28, 2025

1:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Ashley Carrick, Co-Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid, Co-Chair
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Cathy Tilton
Representative Elexie Moore

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: OVERVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE STATEWIDE
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

KATHERINE KEITH, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided the Overview and Update of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program presentation and took questions from the committee.

DOM PANNONE, Director
Program Management and Administration
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided the Overview and Update of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program presentation and took questions from the committee.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:32:42 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR ASHLEY CARRICK called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Representatives Mina, Stutes, McCabe, Tilton, Moore, Eischeid, and Carrick were present at the call to order.

PRESENTATION: Overview and Update of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

[1:33:37 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that the only order of business would be the Overview and Update of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program presentation.

[1:34:50 PM](#)

KATHERINE KEITH, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, began the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program presentation [hard copy included in committee packet] on slide 2, titled "Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Timeline," and overviewed the timeline of STIP development.

[1:38:08 PM](#)

MS. KEITH, in response to questions from various committee members, stated that the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is required to coordinate with its metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) and has had 70 meetings from April 2024 to present. She opined that the issues MPOs are raising about not being included in STIP development may be referring to not receiving a copy of the STIP until the public comment period, but stated DOT&PF is not allowed to submit an entire draft of a public document to an MPO policy board or technical committee without it becoming publicly available. She said that DOT&PF and the MPOs are working on a collaborative document to set expectations for engagement over the development of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and the STIP. There have been documented issues between MPOs and DOT&PF over STIP development going back to 2012.

The new requirement that projects which fall under the purview of the TIP had to be removed from the STIP without a grace

period caused some projects to not be programmed. She provided her understanding that the executive directors of the MPOs communicate directly with federal partners but do not officially represent the MPO while doing so. Following the comments from federal partners on the original STIP, more tracking of agenda items on the daily communications between DOT&PF and the MPOs has been implemented. She clarified that the MPO policy board should comment only on projects that fall within the boundary of the MPO but can make comments as a member of the public about any project within the state. She stated that MPOs share the same sub-allocation of funding, and the creation of the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Valley MPO impacts funding allocation. FAST Planning did not receive a significant reduction in funding due to sub-allocation funding changes.

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MS. KEITH resumed the presentation on slide 3, titled "STIP Through the Years - Complexity," and stated that the number of pages in the STIP has increased from under 500 to 3,000 pages and DOT&PF has developed new tools for the STIP and the public comment process.

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MS. KEITH, in response to questions from various committee members, affirmed that DOT&PF has adequate and competent staffing to complete developing the STIP. She stated artificial intelligence did not play a role in the STIP development, but DOT&PF is considering its use for back-end tasks, predictions, and finding trends. She explained the increase of the STIP document was due to the inclusion in over 1,000 pages of disposition of public comment, a larger fiscal constraint document, and directly attaching MPO TIPs, Western Federal Lands Highway Division TIP, and Tribal TIP. She provided her understanding that Alaska has the largest STIP in the union and is having an unusual experience. The development of the STIP is a collaborative project and in May 2023 the DOT&PF Office of the Commissioner stepped in after noticing a large backlog on the first draft of the STIP. She stated that she is currently the acting Northern Region director and is the sole deputy commissioner, but DOT&PF is looking to hire a Northern Region director and has reorganized some administrative structuring to accommodate a single deputy commissioner. She said that fundamentally the governor approves the STIP and Commissioner Anderson has signing authority.

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MS. KEITH moved to slide 4, "STIP Through the Years - Project and Program Inclusion," and stated that DOT&PF removed the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS)/FAST Planning Community Transportation Programs from the STIP to have the programs implemented in the MPO's TIP instead, which caused DOT&PF to reprogram over 70 projects into the STIP.

[2:13:34 PM](#)

DOM PANNONE, Director, Program Management and Administration, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, transitioned to slide 5 and explained that in previous STIPs DOT&PF overprogrammed projects by about 30 percent to account for project encountering cost increases. During the process of modernizing the STIP to an e-STIP system the overprogramming became a fiscal constraint issue that caused federal partners to intervene.

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MR. PANNONE, in response to questions from Representative McCabe, clarified that overprogramming is having more projects or programs than the federal government is providing revenue for, and that in previous STIPs there was language that allowed cleared projects that had unanticipated costs to continue without having to go through public comment periods. He added that the special language was removed in the first approved STIP.

[2:19:15 PM](#)

MR. PANNONE moved to slide 6 and overviewed the team behind STIP development.

[2:22:00 PM](#)

MR. PANNONE, in response to a question from Representative Mina, stated that the DOT&PF Division of Planning & Program Development is a legacy division that was redistributed to other sections of DOT&PF.

MS. KEITH, in response to questions from various committee members, stated that the Division of Project Delivery Services works on the transportation program and emphasized the cross department nature of STIP development. She stated that the STIP

team had over 300 years of combined experience on developing the STIP and she would provide the committee with a list of staff. She agreed with a statement from Representative McCabe that the issues with STIP development are due to it being a new type of STIP, the e-STIP failing due to computer issues, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) enforcing new regulations. She provided her understanding that the comment from the commissioner [on February 15, 2024 in the House Transportation Standing Committee] about the staff working on STIP development having no previous experience was in relation only to lacking experience with the new type of STIP.

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MS. KEITH continued the presentation on slide 7 and commented that Alaska DOT&PF won an award at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Transportation Communication Conference for its public involvement efforts.

[2:31:13 PM](#)

MS. KEITH, in response to a question from Co-Chair Carrick, speculated that the 7+ news media stories involving STIP could be press releases instead of media stories.

MR. PANNONE clarified that the 7+ news stories were only from the 45-day comment period.

MS. KEITH, in response to a question from Co-Chair Carrick, stated tribal consultation was being transformed as the previous methods of communication were not reaching tribal communities.

[2:34:39 PM](#)

MS. KEITH moved to slide 8 and stated that of the 14 corrective actions provided by FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), DOT&PF considers 10 resolved while DOT&PF considers all resolved.

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MS. KEITH, in response to questions from various committee members, affirmed that the federal agencies only gave DOT&PF 16 days to recreate the entire STIP due to some of the corrective actions pertaining to structural issues with the STIP. The development of the e-STIP began in 2021 but in 2023 DOT&PF became aware of issues with overprogramming and attempted to fix

them within the e-STIP until July 2023. Federal agencies approved an extension to the STIP deadline from September 2023 to March 2024, which gave DOT&PF more time to hold conversations and would have been provided more time to rewrite the STIP had federal partners provided written guidance sooner.

MR. PANNONE clarified that STIP development was on track until the e-STIP software and programming created issues. The deadline for the STIP was set with the one time extension and DOT&PF struggled to receive concrete guidelines and goals despite having frequent meetings with FHWA and a fiscal constraint planner.

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MS. KEITH, in response to questions from various committee members, provided her understanding that the one other state that uses the same software that DOT&PF was using to develop the e-STIP was having issues only with cost. She added that after the e-STIP, DOT&PF decided to use "low tech" open source software to provide flexibility for adding features. She stated that FHWA and FTA are currently reviewing the drafted second amendment for the STIP as per the request of Gloria Shepherd, Executive Director of FHWA. Of the \$45 million that DOT&PF has obligated towards 260 projects, most of the funding is coming from federal revenue.

MR. PANNONE clarified that the target date for Amendment 2 of the STIP was communicated to the MPOs but is not a requirement. He emphasized the communications between FHWA, FTA, and DOT&PF and the necessity to amend the STIP quickly.

[2:52:27 PM](#)

MS. KEITH returned to the presentation on slides 10-11 and stated that DOT&PF contested many of the planning findings from FHWA and FTA because the findings were not clear enough to act on. To slide 15, she stated that the Richardson Highway Milepost 346 Chena Bridge is outside the FAST Planning MPO Boundary and DOT&PF was able to get the related federal finding reversed.

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MS. KEITH, in response to questions from Representative McCabe, stated the FAST Planning was aware of the Richardson Highway Milepost 346 Chena Bridge but there is confusion between it and

DOT&PF over whether it is in the metropolitan planning area (MPA) or not. She added that the Safer Seward Highway Corridor partially falls within the border of AMATS MPA, which did not agree with the use of federal highway system funding; DOT&PF has changed the terminus of the project to fall on milepost 112.5, outside of AMATS MPA. She agreed with a comment from Representative McCabe that the issues at hand were caused by organizations inside the state presuming they had authority over long-standing projects.

[3:00:30 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at p.m.